

Frequently Asked Questions & Answers About: Immunization, Immunization Requirements, and Exemptions for Preschool & School Entry

IMMUNIZATION

1. Who and what is the “ACIP”?

The ACIP is the **Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices**, a group of 15 experts in fields associated with immunization who have been selected by the Secretary of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services to provide advice and guidance to the Secretary, the Assistant Secretary for Health, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on the most effective means to prevent vaccine-preventable diseases. The Committee develops written recommendations for the routine administration of vaccines for pediatric and adult populations, along with schedules regarding the appropriate periodicity, dosage, and applicable contraindications. The recommendations are used in the development of state immunization requirements for school entry. There are “comprehensive” as well as “vaccine specific” **ACIP statements** available on CDC’s National Immunization Program website at www.cdc.gov/nip.

2. What is the “4-Day grace period” for timing and spacing of vaccines?

In an effort to increase the flexibility of the complicated childhood immunization schedule, ACIP recommends that vaccine doses administered **up to four days before the minimum interval or age can be counted as valid**. It is used primarily when reviewing **vaccination records**, and can be applied when assessing immunizations for appropriate age and spacing between doses. For example, if, when reviewing an immunization history it is noted that an MMR was given 1-4 days prior to the first birthday, it is no longer considered necessary to repeat the dose.

3. What is the recommended schedule for Hepatitis B vaccine?

Hepatitis B vaccine is a series of 3 doses and is routinely given to infants at birth, 1-2 months, and 6-18 months. However, for individuals who did not receive the vaccine as an infant the series may be started at any age. When reviewing hepatitis B immunization records it is important to remember:

- The last dose (# 3), in the **infant series** should not be given earlier than 6 months of age; and,
- Minimum spacing between doses for anyone > 6 months of age is 4 weeks between #1 & #2, and 8 weeks between #2 & #3. Overall there must be ≥ 16 weeks between #1 & #3.

4. An immunization record reviewed shows a child received his 1st and 2nd dose of hepatitis B vaccine 2 years ago but never received his third dose. Does he need to restart the series?

According to ACIP recommendations, as long as there is documentation of day, month and year of a previous dose(s) the series does not need to be restarted, regardless of the amount of time that has passed since the previous dose.

5. Where can I find educational information about vaccine-preventable disease and vaccines for parents?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Immunization Program website www.cdc.gov/nip, and the Immunization Action Coalition website www.immunize.org produce excellent educational information for parents as well as links to other educational websites.

PRESCHOOL IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS (Includes daycare)

6. What immunizations do preschoolers need?

Preschoolers (includes daycare) must be “*age appropriately*” immunized against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (DTaP); polio (IPV); measles, mumps, rubella (MMR); Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib); hepatitis B, pneumococcal and varicella (chickenpox) vaccine or have a physician documented history of varicella disease. “*Age appropriate*” simply means the number of doses of a vaccine a child should have received, and is dependent upon the child’s age (i.e.; by the time a child is 5 months of age he/she should have two doses of hepatitis B, polio, Hib, and DTaP vaccines).

7. How do I know what the appropriate age is for preschool immunizations?

To determine the appropriate age or schedule for immunizations, refer to the *Recommended Childhood Immunization Schedule*. The schedule is developed each year by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The *Recommended Childhood Immunization Schedule* can be obtained by contacting the Rhode Island Department of Health Immunization Program at 222-2312 or you can download the schedule from the CDC National Immunization Program website at www.cdc.gov/nip or the Immunization Action Coalition website at www.immunize.org.

Frequently Asked Questions & Answers About: Immunization, Immunization Requirements, and Exemptions for Preschool & School Entry

8. *Is meningococcal vaccine required for preschool entry?*

Meningococcal vaccine is **NOT** required for preschool entry.

SCHOOL IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS (K-12)

9. *What immunizations are required for kindergarten entry?*

Children entering kindergarten are required to have:

Vaccine	# of Doses	Recommended Schedule	Rules to Consider When Reviewing Immunization Records for School Entry
Hepatitis B	3	Birth-2mo, 2-4 mo & 6-18 mo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum spacing between doses: 4wks between #1& #2; 8 wks between #2 & #3. Overall there must be <u>>16</u> wks between #1 & #3.
DTaP	5	2,4,6,15-18 mo & 4-6 yrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If # 4 was given on or after 4th birthday then 5th dose is not needed
Polio	4	2,4,6-18 mo & 4-6 yrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 doses of any combination of OPV & IPV separated by at least 4 weeks before age 4 is acceptable. If # 3 of an all-IPV or all-OPV series was given on or after 4th birthday then a 4th dose is not needed Anyone who has received a combination of OPV & IPV needs a total of 4 doses even if 3rd dose was given after 4 years of age.
MMR	2	12-15 mo & 4-6 yrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dose #1 was administered on or after 1st birthday There is a minimum interval of 28 days between dose #1 & #2
Varicella	1	12-18 mo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May accept physician statement of history of disease
Reminder: The "4 Day Grace Period" for timing and spacing of all vaccines (as defined in question # 2 above) may be used when reviewing records.			

10. *What immunizations are required for 7th grade entry?*

All of the above **AND** a booster dose of Td (tetanus and diphtheria) vaccine, if it has been 5 years or more since the last dose of diphtheria-tetanus containing vaccine.

Note: Students ≥ 13 years of age who have not received varicella vaccine and do not have a history of disease will need 2 doses of varicella, 4-8 weeks apart.

11. *How many doses of MMR are required for school entry?*

ALL children in school (K-12) are required to have 2 doses of a "measles containing vaccine" (preferably MMR), one dose of mumps vaccine, and one dose of rubella vaccine. There must be at least one month between the first and second dose.

12. *Is meningococcal vaccine required for school entry?*

Meningococcal vaccine is **NOT** required for school entry.

13. *Are children required to have Hib vaccine for kindergarten entry?*

No, Hib vaccine is not routinely recommended for children 5 years of age or older.

14. *If a child has documentation of 4 doses of polio prior to age 4 years, is another dose still required for kindergarten entry?*

No. Four doses of either all OPV or IPV, or any combination of OPV and IPV given before the 4th birthday is sufficient for kindergarten entry. Each dose should be separated by at least 1 month.

15. *If the fifth dose of DTaP is given before 4 years of age, does it need to be repeated for entry into kindergarten?*

Yes, according to the ACIP, a booster dose of DTaP vaccine is needed after 4 years of age to boost immunity to diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis. A fifth dose given prior to 4 years of age is considered too early and should be repeated. Therefore, a dose of DTaP vaccine administered **after** 4 years of age is required for school entry.

Frequently Asked Questions & Answers About: Immunization, Immunization Requirements, and Exemptions for Preschool & School Entry

16. What if a child had fallen behind and received a fourth dose of DTaP after 4 years of age. Do they still need another dose?

No, if the 4th dose was given after the fourth birthday, a 5th dose is not needed.

17. If a student entering 7th grade only received 3 doses of DTaP with no other documentation of Td received since that time, does that child now need a dose of Td to complete their primary series and bring them up-to-date, (because they are now > 7 years of age) as well as a dose for 7th grade entry?

According to CDC's National Immunization Program, the number of doses of DT containing vaccine needed to complete the series depends on the age at which the child received the first dose. If the first dose of DTP/DTaP/DT was given before the first birthday, then a total of 4 doses are recommended. If the first dose was given after 12 months of age, only 3 doses are needed.

18. What documentation is needed to prove a history of varicella (chickenpox) disease?

A statement of history of varicella disease signed by a health care provider.

19. I thought the first booster dose of Td was given at 14-16 years of age, but now I read it's recommended at 11-12. years of age and a requirement for entry into 7th grade. When did this change occur?

In 1996, the ACIP/AAP/AAFP published their recommendation for a routine adolescent immunization visit at 11-12 years of age. (*Immunization of Adolescents* ACIP statement can be found on CDC's National Immunization Program website at www.cdc.gov/nip). This visit is intended to ensure that all recommended vaccines have been administered before the child begins middle school or junior high school. At the adolescent visit the child should receive the first routine booster dose of Td if at least 5 years have passed since the last dose of a tetanus containing vaccine (DTP/DTaP). In addition to Td, the child should receive varicella vaccine (if not previously infected or vaccinated), the second dose of MMR (if not already given), and should begin or continue the hepatitis B series if not complete. This became a requirement for 7th grade entry in August 1999 in Rhode Island schools.

EXEMPTIONS

20. What are the exemption categories for a student to be exempt from the immunization requirements in Rhode Island?

There are 3 exemption categories:

- **MEDICAL EXEMPTION:** A physician signs a statement that the student is exempt from a specific vaccine because of medical reasons, in accordance with the ACIP guidelines, AAP guidelines, or package insert instructions.
- **RELIGIOUS EXEMPTION:** A parent or guardian signs the **Religious Exemption Form** provided by the Division of Family Health Immunization Program of the Department, on the grounds of religious beliefs.
- **TEMPORARY EXEMPTION:** The administrative head of the preschool or school or his/her designee signs a **Temporary Exemption Form** indicating that an appointment with a health care provider for the required immunization(s) has been made. The temporary exemption should expire on the date of the immunization appointment.

21. Where do I get the exemption forms?

Exemption forms can be obtained only by preschools and schools by contacting the Rhode Island Department of Health Family Information Line at 1 800-942-7434.

More Questions?

Contact Pat Raymond, RN, Rhode Island Department of Health Immunization Program
Phone 222-5921 or e-mail patr@doh.state.ri.us